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ABSTRACT

Both the literature on adult learning and the literature on the composing process focus on students and their behaviors rather than on teachers and their methods or on curricular content and structure. The most productive teaching of nontraditional students and the most useful educational research about them begins with the students themselves, rather than with teachers or subject matter. The literature notes six characteristics that differentiate adult learners from their younger counterparts: (1) experience, (2) responsibility, (3) pragmatism, (4) motivation, (5) diversity, (6) and potential insecurity. These descriptive characteristics of adult learners served as background for an ethnographic case study of a class of freshman developmental writers attending an adult degree program. The experiences of two students revealed dimensions of the adult student's experience that, along with the literature on adult learning, have implications for testing and placement as well as for curriculum and instruction. These implications raise questions that challenge educators seeking to serve adult students: (1) What factors within an educator's control in testing situations are likely to allay anxieties of adults who may have not taken tests for years? (2) What types of assessment instruments are best suited for adult learners? (3) Can a range of placement options appropriate to the diversity of adult students be provided? (4) Can a sequence of courses be created to serve the needs of students with diverse experiences? (5) Can teaching methods be adopted to meet adult needs? (HTH)

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What's Different About Teaching Adult Student Writers?

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It has become customary at forums of this sort to review the rich literature emerging from more than a decade of intensive research on the composing process. So customary is it that I will simply assume the audience's general familiarity with this material and concentrate instead on the less familiar, but equally provocative studies of adult learning and education, using them as background to my own case study of two adult student writers. Before I do that, however, let me offer the observation that both the literature on adult learning and the literature on the composing process share a common feature. Both can be broadly identified as learner-centered. Both bodies of research and theory focus on students and their behaviors rather than on teachers and their methods or on curricular content and structure. Studies of the composing process explore how various types of writers behave in different situations. Recent studies of adult learning also focus on the learners themselves - who they are, what they do and

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why they do it.

This broad parallel is not coincidental. Research in both areas is connected with dramatic changes in the student population entering higher education since the late sixties. In explaining the development of a "new paradigm for teaching writing," a paradigm based largely on "research on writers' composing processes," Maxine Hairston (1982) makes this connection explicit:

> I believe that the external conditions which have hastened the crisis in the teaching of writing are open admissions policies, the return to school of veterans and other groups of older students who are less docile and rule-bound than traditional freshmen, the national decline in conventional verbal skills, and the ever larger number of high school graduates going on to college as our society demands more and more credentials for economic citizenship. (p.82)

Established pedagogies, including methods of teaching writing, have been called into question by the emergence of what Patricia Cross (1971) calls "new students to higher education." These new or nontraditional students challenge the traditional categories and conventional wisdom of academia.

The most productive teaching of nontraditional students and the most useful educational research about them begins with the students themselves, rather than with teachers or subject matter.

Adult Learning Theory

As an important segment of the nontraditional student population, adult learners have become the subject of a growing

body of research. The seminal work of Aslanian and Brickell (1980), Cross (1981), Kidd (1973), Knowles (1978) and Levinson (1978) can serve as a basis for identifying the characteristics of adult students which differentiate them from their traditional-aged counterparts. Six characteristics are repeatedly and emphatically noted in the literature:

1) Experience - Adults have not only more but different kinds of experiences than younger students. Through work, travel, military service, marriage, divorce, parenthood, and involvement in politics, community and church, adult students have accumulated an extensive store of life experiences which they bring to the college classroom.

2) Responsibility - Adults are responsible for other people: for spouses and children, for older family members, for co-workers, for church and community associates. They have varied social roles and competing demands on their time.

3) Pragmatism - Malcolm Knowles (1978) suggests that adult learners need and demand immediate possibilities for applying their knowledge, that their learning orientation is problem-centered rather than subject-centered. Thus, adult students are often resistant to survey or theoretical courses. They want to know how each course, each segment of new learning, will advance their careers, help their communities, or improve their personal relationships.

4) Motivation - Unlike high school students and even many 18-year-olds whose continuation onto college can hardly be con-

sidered a conscious choice among alternative paths, adult students are voluntary learners. Returning to school after five, ten or twenty years is a major life decision for them, and they re-enter the classroom prepared for hard work and sacrifice. Their high level of motivation is often connected with what Aslanian and Brickell (1980) call "triggering events" such as a change of job, return to the workforce, divorce or death of a spouse.

5) Diversity - In some ways the most important characteristic, the diversity of adult students results from diverse experiences, varied roles and responsibilities, physiological changes, different life phases and levels of ego and cognitive development. Take any given class of adult college students and compare it with any class of 18-year-old freshmen, and the salient feature of the adults will generally be their diversity of background, interests and abilities.

6) Potential Insecurity - Many adult students exhibit a puzzling combination of high hopes and uncertainty. They are motivated to learn and hopeful that new learning will improve their lives, but they may also doubt their ability to acquire that learning. For some this lack of confidence reflects past negative experiences with school; for others it stems from a fear that, as they age, they are no longer capable of keeping up with the demands of academic work.

Case Studies of Two Adult Students in Their First-Semester Writing Course

These descriptive characteristics of adult learners served

as background themes for my own ethnographic case study of a class of freshman writers attending the School of New Resources, the adult degree program of the College of New Rochelle. During the study, I attended all fifteen sessions of a developmental writing course, "Translating Experience Into Essay." I recorded each class on tape, took observational notes, photocopied everything the students wrote, and conducted formal and informal interviews throughout the semester. From a class of twenty students, I have selected two, Marvine and Josie, as the focus for my presentation today. Although their experiences in the course differed sharply, even in their polar differences Marvine and Josie revealed dimensions of the adult student's experience to which writing teachers and all teachers of adults should attend.

Marvine is a Black woman in her mid-twenties, born and raised in the Bronx. The single mother of a four-year-old boy, she worked as a supermarket cashier at the time of the study. She attended public schools until leaving in the eleventh grade. Josie is a Black woman in her late thirties who was raised on a farm in South Carolina. Her family moved to New York City in 1963 after an ugly incident over her eight-year-old brother playing with a white girl. Married and the mother of a teenage girl, Josie separated from her husband during her first semester in college. She has been a Pentecostal minister since 1973.

I want to highlight three themes which emerged from the data I gathered on these two adult college students: their anxiety about returning to school, the connections between their life

experience and their writing, and the relation between their classroom inter-actions and their writing.

Anxiety: Marvine

Like many adult students, Marvine and Josie expressed anxiety about returning to school. Marvine told me that she had expected "a hardnosed college instructor with lots of demands....lots of work that I'd never be able to finish....lots of quizzes and exams." Her negative expectations were influenced directly by an older brother's stormy college career and indirectly by her own discouraging experience with a high school English teacher who responded to her writing with a constant refrain of "You can do better."

Anxiety: Josie

Josie's anxieties about returning to an academic setting were connected with painful memories of her years in a segregated, rural high school in the South. She recalled a succession of "cold, hard, mean" teachers who judged their students by skin tone and social status. Josie recounted her feelings when she came to register for college: "I was so scared about learning and school and the teachers and everything. That's why I didn't enter college much sooner, because I was afraid of going through what I did when I was a teenager."

We know that past school experiences condition our reactions to new school experiences, and Marvine's and Josie's fears about college were perhaps not qualitatively different from the anxieties of an 18-year-old, so-called underachiever. Yet I think it is

safe to posit that the insecurity of an academically unprepared college applicant increases in proportion to the number of years she has delayed returning to school.

Writing and Life Experience: Marvine

Adult students bring a broader, more complex range of experiences into the writing classroom. Both Marvine and Josie, for example, had engaged in significant self-initiated writing activities between leaving high school and entering college. These writing activities, although very different from each other, were related to typical adult experiences.

Marvine's self-initiated writing began after her son's birth in 1980, a period of great emotional turmoil. She began writing to herself about her feelings and about problems that were weighing on her mind. She would take a sheet of paper, write in an unbroken flow "from the beginning on off the page," then put the paper in what she called her "writing box." She maintained this writing box up to the time of my study, writing more and with greater intensity during the periods following traumatic or stressful events: the birth of her son, a friend's nervous breakdown, her return to school.

I first became aware of Marvine's private writing when I observed her writing extensively during class at times when other students were involved in discussion with the instructor. I particularly noticed how she sat back from the seminar-style table with her head down and the notebook on her lap. She explained later that she was writing for herself about recent

events in her life. I noted then how her self-initiated writing sometimes shut her off from the collective activities of the class.

Through Marvine's instructor I was given an opportunity to see some of this writing. It was unedited, with no apparent concern for form, and implicitly addressed to herself. Like much freewriting it resembled an interior dialogue with one's self. The way Marvine talked about her private writing underscored its interiority and self-referential character:

> I found that I could write my feelings and then hide it in a place no one else could find it and still save it for me.... Whenever there's something that I can't solve it alone, I make it a part of my writer's box. Usually after writing about it, I feel better.

Reading some of her self-initiated writing and analyzing her motives and occasions for writing led me to characterize it as a form of coping behavior, a cathartic response to the emotional stress and trauma of a single mother with poor health, financial problems, few friends, an abusive male companion, and the added strain of a full-time college program.

Writing and Life Experience: Josie

Josie's self-initiated writing was of a very different sort, yet also connected with a typical adult experience. Josie doesn't remember doing any writing in high school. But she began to write about ten years ago when she took up her ministry and found that she needed to outline her sermons to ensure that they would be

sufficiently clear and structured to meet her exacting standards. After several years of outlining sermons, Josie had developed both a repertoire appropriate for most topics and occasions and a facility for oral composition:

> When I first started preaching I wrote my sermons out but now I don't have to do it....I've got it in my head.... I can bring a sermon out at a moment's notice. I can walk into a church and just preach.

Josie's work also included writing letters, church bulletins and plays on religious themes. If Marvine's self-initiated writing could be characterized as a type of coping response to the crises of an adult's life, Josie's self-initiated writing (and by extension her oral composition) could be characterized as a type of professional communication with an audience at the workplace.

Writing and Classroom Interactions: Marvine

Not only did Marvine and Josie have significant writing backgrounds which were linked to typical adult experiences, but their different histories as writers seemed related to their very different reactions to their first-semester writing course. In completing her essay assignments, Marvine's success varied sharply with the topic and the extent to which the format was prescribed. An early assignment, for example, required that she describe an imagined experience of moving through an open meadow. Marvine responded with a single-draft essay that flowed easily onto the page and echoed her speaking voice (see Appendix A-1). She reported to me sometime later that she had in fact "just been out in the country"

in New Jersey and had already written about a grassy meadow in which she had spent a few happy moments.

A week later Marvine took a departmental assessment test in class. This involved finding a common theme in three different texts and comparing the different treatments of that theme. In contrast to her sense of pleasure and ease in writing the essay about the meadow, Marvine felt confused and strait-jacketed by having to respond to someone else's text. In writing about Ogden Nash's ironic poem "Love Under the Republicans (or Democrats)," she expressed her difficulties with a directness that would seem more appropriate for a journal entry than for a formal essay (see Appendix A-2). Comments such as "I'm finding it very difficult to get out what I'm trying to say" and "I've got a lot of mixed feelings about this writing and its coming out all scrambled up" echoed the conversational voice of a diarist writing to herself or to an intimate audience. Marvine's essays closely resembled the first (and lowest) of five stages of writing development which Carl Bereiter (1980) labels "associative writing." This stage is marked by a newly acquired fluency which

> ...consists essentially of writing down whatever comes to mind, in the order in which it comes to mind.... Given an 'interesting' topic - that is, one that elicits an immediate flow of ideas - they (associative writers) can write easily and are pleased with what they produce.... Associative writers say they stop writing when they run out of ideas.(p.83)

We might expect that Marvine's years of self-initiated, personal writing would be a source of strength in a developmental writing course. But, on the contrary, it seemed that she had become so locked into a single mode of writing, of freeflowing dialogue with herself about the daily events and problems of her life, that she resisted the demands of academic writing. She resisted assigned topics and prescribed formats, and perhaps most importantly she resisted the implicit demands of a public audience.

Just as she used her writing box to avoid communication about her problems and feelings with someone else, she was reluctant to write personal narratives that she might have to read in class. She recounted to me a conversation with her instructor, Joan, about the difficulties she had writing a narrative "about a lonely time in (her) life." Marvine was nearly overwhelmed by the emotions triggered by this assignment. She told Joan "I can't write an essay because I know that it would have to be submitted and other students would share it in class, and I don't want to do that." Unable to shape this volatile material into an essay with beginning, middle and end, she instead wrote a freeform poem to convey the feeling without recounting the event. This poem was for Joan's eyes only.

During the fifteen weeks of the course Marvine declined every opportunity to read her work in class. She did, however, share both her course assignments and some of her personal writing with two people: another student and her instructor.

The other student, Yvette, was a neighbor who had attended high school with Marvine's sister. Marvine and Yvette gravitated towards

each other from the first day. They traveled to school together, sat together at every class, worked collaboratively on in-class assignments and read their draft essays to each other. Yvette became Marvine's confidant, in the process allowing Marvine to broaden somewhat her sense of audience. As Marvine put it, "If Yvette weren't there, I'd need somebody else. She helps me focus to the point."

Joan was not only Marvine's writing instructor but her advisor as well. Joan had met Marvine during registration, gently reassured the anxious new student and encouraged her to visit or call if she had any problems. During the semester, Marvine made frequent visits to Joan's office, often stayed after class to talk with her and called her both at home and at work. Sometimes they discussed classwork, but more often Marvine needed to air personal problems. This relationship was obviously important to Marvine as she struggled with the issues of privacy, trust and public audience for her writing. Marvine reported to me that "Joan was the first person that I ever showed any of my (personal) writings to. From her reading those, I felt that she understood me." This act of trust was a crucial step for Marvine in the difficult task of conceptualizing and accepting the demands of an audience other than herself.

Her interactions with Yvette and Joan encouraged Marvine to broaden her sense of audience somewhat. The initial step for her was, in effect, to stop talking to herself on paper and begin talking to someone else. This someone else was addressed directly in the second person in several essays, for example, her "Meadow" essay

(Appendix A-1) and another narrative that she wrote on the first day of her second semester writing course (see Appendix A-3). I was her instructor for that course, and here she alluded to my prior knowledge about her to create a sense of intimate dialogue: "As you may know I write privately, poetry and then just whatever is on my mind that may be puzzling." If Marvine's self-initiated writing was a way of coping with her problems by verbalizing them to herself, her first experience of academic writing was a challenge to find other motives and other audiences for her writing, a challenge which she met with partial success through the help of a peer collaborator and a teacher who encouraged intimacy and inspired trust.

Writing and Classroom Interactions: Josie

Josie's reaction to the course - her interactions with the instructor, with other students and with her own writing - was quite different from Marvine's, yet Josie's classroom interactions, like Marvine's, were conditioned by typically, and distinctively, adult experiences. Josie returned to school with greater clarity of purpose than Marvine. In an essay written as part of her application for admission, she stated:

> The reason I'm returning to school - I feel that my vocabulary need to be broader....I am required to speak to a congregation at least twice a week.... To be successful I need to speak intelligently and fluently.

From the beginning Josie stressed her desire for improvement in skills she perceived as career-related, and at the heart of her

career/vocation was the need to communicate significant ideas to an audience on a regular basis.

Unlike Marvine's experience of self-initiated writing, Josie's writing history helped prepare her for success in a developmental writing course. She came to college with implicit understanding of two concepts which many students only grasp with great difficulty: the constraints a public audience places on a writer and the need for forms of organization to facilitate communication with that audience.

Josie caught my attention early in the semester. At the very first session I observed her doing an in-class writing assignment, working slowly and deliberately and erasing frequently. My initial impression was that she was just editing at word level, fretting over spelling and inflectional endings without any larger rhetorical concern. This impression was dispelled as I watched her write a second draft with some significant reorganization. In response to a question, she told me that she wrote the second draft "to improve my paragraphing" and because she wanted "to rearrange" the essay to include a new idea.

Josie's handling of the first homework assignment was also noteworthy. The instructor had asked students to take three terms, "seeing, hearing and clarity," and to write the meanings of those words, allowing them to opt either for dictionary definitions or for personal interpretations. While Marvine and most other students wrote a single sentence or phrase for each term, Josie selected one term, "seeing," and wrote a thoughtful essay of three paragraphs

(see Appendix B-1). Her essay ended on a homiletic note: "I feel it is wise to train the mind to see as well as the eyes, because it is a way to increase your intellect." Here, I thought, was a student writing with a sense of "the reader over your shoulder."

Josie's essay on an open meadow (see Appendix B-2) was not so different from Marvine's. It too expressed a sense of reverie, of the imagination in celebratory dialogue with itself. It too lacked paragraphing and other overt signs of formal organization. Josie's essay, however, was a second draft, incorporating significant word and sentence editing and the insertion of four new sentences. It also ended with a greater sense of closure and reflection than Marvine attempted:

> While lying on that green plush carpet that describes itself as grass I am hearing a beautiful poem echoing in my mind.
>
> 'Thank you God.
> for the birds that sing.
> Thank you God
> for everything.'

Like Marvine Josie mined the events of her life for material to write about. But where Marvine resisted what she perceived as an audience's demand for disclosure of herself and her experiences, Josie seemed almost impelled to reflect on and share her experiences with others. This was particularly evident in her conclusions, which were sometimes didactic, sometimes inspirational. Here, for example, is the conclusion of a narrative about growing up on a farm:

I never understood how I was able to enjoy the farm with

> Carrie always badgering me, but when my childhood had ended, if I could have reached back, bottled and sold the fun I had on the farm, for what it was worth to me, I would have been a rich woman.

The section of Marvine's departmental assessment essay in which she responded to Ogden Nash's bleakly ironic poem about marriage ended with her confessing to "mixed feelings" and "scrambled up" writing. Josie, on the other hand, attempted to offer helpful advice to her readers: "I feel many marriages starts without realizing it is more to marriage than meets the eye. In all marriages there should be a little carefree pleasure."

Josie showed her desire to share her writing, her ideas and experiences by reading her work in class at every opportunity, about seven times in all. She also had a very different relationship with her fellow students than Marvine. Just as her essays conveyed a sense of authority over her material, her participation in class evinced the quiet authority that comes of knowing who you are and where you stand. At the fourth class a reference in the composition text to polygamy sparked a lively, spontaneous discussion of extramarital affairs and double standards for sexual behavior. After about fifteen minutes of unstructured dialogue, some competitive vulgarity and much embarrassed laughter, Josie spoke up, addressing herself to her fellow students:

> I feel women should feel more stronger and care more about themselves.... You're supposed to be number one and care more about yourself. You should say 'Listen I don't have to accept this. He wouldn't accept

> it from me.' Listen, there's a time that we don't have to wait for a man to support us. We can do that ourselves, and I don't think we should take this type of a thing just to be supported.

This was typical of Josie's role in classroom discussions, intervening at a point when the interchange among students began to drift, focusing on a central issue and offering a clear, forcefully stated position on the issue. Her classmates were not surprised when they learned after the fourth session that Josie was a minister. Her strength of character and the persuasiveness of her speech and writing had already identified her as a leader, and she was acutely aware of other people's need for leadership. "I see the other students," she told me after one class, "the same as I see my congregation, as a group of people waiting to be guided."

Like most successful speakers and writers, Josie was in conscious control of her rhetorical strategies. She explained to me one day after she had played a mediating role in a heated exchange over students' difficulties in oral reading:

> You noticed that I include myself. I felt that if I included myself, it would be accepted more by the students. Instead of saying 'they' or 'you,' I said '<u>We</u> are all here to learn and it's hard at first, but eventually we'll get better.'

As she reflected on her general approach to selecting topics, organizing her material and focussing on her audience's needs, she made explicit connections with her career experience:

> I started writing and then I realized: I think I was having

> less problems than a lot of the students, and I felt that this was because I had some experiences with sermons. They asked me where I learned to write, and I said I write in church.

She described her sermons as "done on an essay style": "I will choose a topic. I will give an introduction. Then I will go into the body of the sermon, then close it out, same as I do an essay." She reiterated the importance of a closing statement: "I never leave the congregation hanging... like some preachers do."

Josie worked hard in her first semester writing course, finding the kernel of personal significance in each assignment, drafting and redrafting each essay until she had made her meaning clear to herself and to the audience which she imagined as she wrote - "a group of people waiting to be guided." She built on the sturdy sense of rhetoric she had developed over ten years of preaching, overcoming her initial anxiety and moving from strength to strength in her school work. Relying on her conscious control as a writer - called "the executive function" by Bereiter (1982) - she acquired an academic vocabulary to discuss her writing and began to master the conventions of the standard dialect and the print code.

Implications for the Design of Developmental Writing Programs

Both the literature on adult learning and the data generated in my own study have implications for the design of developmental writing programs for adults, implications for testing and placement

as well as for curriculum and instruction. These implications can be tentatively surfaced through a series of questions which are themselves implicit challenges to those institutions of higher education that seek to serve adult students. First, some questions about testing and placement:

1) What factors within our control in testing situations are likely to allay the anxieties of adults who may not have taken a test for ten or twenty years? At the School of New Resources, for example, we have small test groups in relatively informal settings and provide individual counseling and orientation to applicants before and after they take placement tests in reading, writing and math.

2) Can we identify the types of assessment instruments best suited for adult learners? We know, for example, that as people age their speed of recall and ability to manipulate data generally slow, although this physiologically based change is often compensated for by increased abilities of reflection and analysis (Cattell, 1971). On that basis, should we apt for power tests over speed tests? And what about the types of reading selections or essay topics? Many of our students have read little else than the Bible, daily newspapers and an occasional self-help book. Should we be assessing them with standardized reading tests which include poems, short fiction and literary essays laced with heavy doses of ironic humor? Should we ask them to write expository or argumentative essays on topics that have no perceived relevance to their lives?

3) Can we provide a range of placement options appropriate to the diversity of adult learners? At the School of New Resources new students can be placed in any one of four levels of writing courses or exempted altogether from a composition requirement. In general, we have found that students like Marvine and Josie need the entire developmental sequence, but other students come with experience writing reports, memos, grant proposals, etc. and require little writing instruction except perhaps in the conventions of the research paper.

Here are some of the questions about curriculum and instruction:

1) Can we create a sequence of courses to serve the needs of students who have such diverse prior experiences with literacy and such varied levels of reading/writing competency? Can we build into those courses a series of successful activities that will encourage students with too little self-esteem and too much experience of failure to persevere in the difficult task of achieving college-level writing proficiency?

2) Can we provide classes small enough to permit both individual student/teacher interactions and opportunities for students to participate actively in class? Can we find instructors skilled in using interactive teaching methods that allow adult students an opportunity to relate new material and activities to their prior experiences and their own conceptual frameworks? It is perhaps obvious that behind these two questions lurks a bias toward the methods of writing-process-oriented teachers who encourage students to share both their writing and their growing perceptions of

themselves of writers.

3) Can we find instructors with strong interpersonal skills and an ability to respond fairly and flexibly to the stresses and crises (family, work, community, health, etc.) that adult students bring with them to class? Can our institutions also provide services adequate to support students struggling with a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities? Such services would include personal and academic counseling and a variety of learning modes to supplement classroom instruction (computer-assisted instruction, programmed self-instructional modules, individual tutoring, etc.).

The extent to which we can give satisfactory answers to these questions determines the extent to which we can meet the challenges posed by nontraditional students like Marvine and Josie.

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Appendix A-1

Marvine's Essay on "An Open Meadow"
(Written at home 10/03/83)

Writing an Imagined Experience

The day is golden with sunshine and there isn't a cloud in the sky. Well let's see what shall I do today? I think I'll take a walk, with the sun gazing over me I could feel myself grow tired. I suddenly noticed a beautiful green-grassy meadow. My heart racing with excitment to see such a sight, breathlessly taking in every inch of my meadow. Along with its loveliness I could feel the warm grass between my toes. I sat down not missing anything there is to see. Flowers, and lady-bugs are all my guests, since we enjoy nature the most. Smiling daises and loveing roses all belong to me, I'm free with no care what-so-ever. Suddenly I realize that I will soon have to return home, where I'm not the center of attention, or such lovely plants have a peaceful home to grow in. Well what do you know, its about to rain and I'm not quite ready to take a detour hike home. Though my surprise meadow is no super surprise now that I'm telling you, I'm trying to understand my total surroundings as the sky pours its clouds out. Now this is where we depart. Though its terrific I'm really quite sleepy.

Note: All errors in these appendices are as found in the students' original essays.

Appendix A-2

One Section of Marvine's Departmental Assessment Essay
(Written in class 10/10/83)

Love under the Republicans
(or Democrats)

To my idea this poem dealt with life between two people obivously in love with one another in a certain era. Its described in a way but not totally as to be hard times, yet not good either. Its deep emotion and there seems to be committment on only one direction from how the author explains it. I wish for myself that it wasn't so demanding to the point where as they will be together in bad & good. Yet one day though not so near he/she may not live to see the next day with this person. I'm finding it very difficult to get out what I'm trying to say. Especially that of what I see in any of these stories. But this particular poem struck me in certain way. For in many ways I identified with it a lot. Now again the part of "And one of these days not too remote, I'll probably up and cut your throat," doesn't clearly come to me as a violent act. And this because it may be a time of departure for these two people. I've got a lot of mixed feelings about this writing and its coming out all scrambled up.

Appendix A-3

Marvine's First Essay in Her Second-Semester Writing Course
(Written in class 1/24/84)

Now as I think back a bit I recall an assignment that was given by my instructor Joan. The course was Translating Experience Into Essay. The course was very emotional for myself. I found out a lot about myself within the course a semester. I learned that I am a private person yet on the other hand wanting so much to be understand, and not labled difficult. Getting back to the main issue here. Joan's homework assignment was to be written about a lonely time in ones life. This automatically struck an emotional bone in me. I wanted so much to write exactly how I was presently feeling on this topic. At this particular time I was definitly facing a lonely time in my life. For some reason I just couldn't get this paper off to a reasonable start. So instead I wrote a poem that I hoped could explain how I was feeling. As you may know I write privately, poetry and then just what ever is on my mind that may be puzzling. So I write to myself in a way. At times I feel it to be very relaxing to write. Yet now I find that if I am at a stressful point I can't focus in enough on one thing long enough to write about it, so that it would be understood by a reader. Sometimes I myself have trouble understanding pieces like this.

Appendix B-1

Josie's Essay on "Seeing"
(Written at home 9/19/83)

Seeing

Seeing does'nt always apply to the natural eye; it also applies to the mind. Many times we see from the natural eye, but not from the mind, because we do not understand what the eye has shown us.

I have an eighteen year old retarded neice whose natural eyes see a great of things that's surrounding her, but her mind sees very little. When she walks to the street corner, her natural eye sees a red light saying "Don't Walk" her mind does'nt see a reason to stop walking, Therefore, she continues walking.

I dwelt with people that have lost their natural eye sight. By spending time with these people, Ive discovered their minds see far more than most people expect. They have used their minds to replace their eyes. This has broadened their thinking ability. I feel it is wise to train the mind to see as well as the eyes, because it is a way to increase your intellect.

Appendix B-2

Josie's Essay on "An Open Meadow"
(Written at home 10/03/85)

Imaginary Experience

I am in a meadow and it is so peaceful here. I don't want to leave, but I know the day is ending and I must go home. I'm taking a stroll and observing the beautiful scenery. The wild flower are push their way up through the thick green grass. From a distance I can hear water flowing from the tall Rocky mountains making itself a stream. I am hearing the birds singing as if they are singing speacially for me. The smell of the fresh air mingle with the smell of pine trees, green grass is unforgetable. I am taking off my sandals and letting my feet sink into the grass. Under my feet the grass feels like cool plush carpet. I am continuing to walk and now I am approaching the stream. The stream is breath taking. I am unable to resist it. I'm stepping into the water and wading as if I am a little girl. I feel like spending the rest of my life here. How to force myself to leave here? I really don't know, it's surroundings seem like the description of heaven. The sun is slowly sinking behind the mountains. I'm thinking, oh my God the day is ending. If only I could reach up and pull that king size red ball back to it's starting point. I still have a few minutes left. I am captureing every moment, because every moment is percious to me. I am leaving the water and saving a little time to meditate and thank God for allowing me to enjoy this beautiful day in the meadow. While lying on that green plush carpet that describes itself as grass I am hearing a beatiful poem echoing in my mind.

"Thank you God
for the birds that sing.
Thank you God
for everything."